PS
3503
.A14N3
1924
Copy 2

FT MEADE
GenColl

Nantucket Windows

EDWINA
STANTON
BABCOCK

Class PS3503
Book .A14N3
1924
Copyright No. Copy 2

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT

NANTUCKET WINDOWS

BY

Edwina Stanton Babcock

Author of
"Greek Wayfarers," "The Flying Parliament," etc

The Inquirer and Mirror Press
Nantucket Island, Mass.
1924

copyright

PS3503
.A14N3
1924
copy2

Copyright, 1924,
Edwina Stanton Babcock

DEC -1 '24

©CIA814046

TO ANNIE BARKER FOLGER

By whose fireside an Off-Islander first learned to love
the charm and grace of Nantucket hospitality

Appreciation is expressed to The National Magazine,
the Nantucket Historical Society Bulletin, the
Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, and
other publications. for permission
to reprint some of these verses

CONTENTS

	Page
Nantucket Windows	9
Dock Drama	10
Ghost House	11
Song of Scarlet	14
Path Maker (to Maria Mitchell)	15
Prophecy Made Going "Down Along"	16
Coast Yarn	17
Bouncing Bet	19
To the "Nineties"	21
Structures	23
Psychoscience	25
Beacon Lights	26
Wheel	27
Nantucketer in France	29
Fishing on Steamboat Wharf	31
The Wallace Daisy Field	33
Youth and the Old Mill	34
Scissors Grinder	39
Whispers	41
Not the Gift but the Giver	43
The Ball	44
The Town Clock Gives Advice to The Tourist	46
Cup	50
To Abram Quary (The Last Indian on Nantucket)	51
3 A. M.	53
On the Jetty	54
Windrow	55
The Swimmer	56
In the Antique Shop	57

CONTENTS

	Page
The Cardinal Flower	58
Wild Bird	59
Sabatia Pond	61
The Lost Dryad	62
Pattran	64
Roof Tree	65
Evening at Franklin Valley Farm	66
Vision	69
Lost Beauty	70
The Branch of Strange Berries (An Old Man tells a Story to some Boys)	71
From a Window	76
Responsible	77
Tree Worship	79
Another Chance	81
Dark Minstrels	83
The People of Today to the Clergy of Today	84
Protagonist	85
Signal Fires	86
Martyr	87
Ballad of the Thorn Tree	88
Balloons on the Beach	89
They Pass	90
On the Beach	91
Saul's Hills	92
Sea Measure	111
In An Old Burying Ground	112
Christmas Eve on Nantucket	114
Song of the Lightships (A Landlubber's Chantey)	116
September Noon	118
Main Street by Moonlight	119
Psalm of Imagined Hunger	121
The Moon Canoe	123
Deprecation	124

NANTUCKET WINDOWS

NANTUCKET WINDOWS

Out on the night they glimmer, Island houses,
Casements of orange lustre on the moors;
Dune-hidden panes where winter sea carouses
Shine on the roads that wind past farmhouse doors.

The Island windows gleam, and all the sorrow
Of human life is lanterned into Dream;
The fishers' huts are splashed, the grey shacks borrow
Red from the sun and weltered moonlight gleam.

Out on the dark, gold patches on the stable,
Light-stippled wharves; ruby and malachite;
Sharp, slanting roofs with witchlike peak and gable,
Plaqued in warm squares of ruddy window light.

Thin blocks of amber in the misty weather,
Oblongs of white translucence on the down;
Dim, tawny lights beyond pine hidden heather,
Clear coastward lights fringing the steepled town.

The grey owl flaps across the heaving hollow,
The chimneyed house sinks in the commons' wave;
The cottage lights a hundred starlights follow,
The Island windows shine.....the road is brave!

DOCK DRAMA

Limp in his chair atilt against a shack
An old man broods o'er newspaper and smoke
Where shingle-quilted pent roofs back to back
Checker from grey of ash to black of coke;
Dim squares of window, opal-paned, baroque,
Waver on water, pearling it to deep
Weedwafted droop of shifting shadow cloak
Where swirls of silver imagery sweep.
Slow ribboning to the surface serpent rings
Of mast reflections quiver into grey
Upon the incoming tide that softly brings
One high-peaked sail along the buoyant way
Where questing water tentatively steals
Fingering mossy spiles and undulant keels.

The steam boat dock's a stage where nightly speak
The actors in some ribald skit of Trade
Here serried barrels screen a jester's freak
And piles of trunks make pirate ambuscade.
Red lanterns slackly swung and lights of jade
Accent accordians' pert canzonette;
Or furry trawls along the string piece laid
Trip oil-skinned fisherman's hulking silhouette.
A massive barge like enigmatic tomb
Toward a sea-scented land of dark drifts down;
Dim on the East the sandy headlands loom
Till dawn rings up green trees and steepled town.
Then like applause in broken scattering sound
The motor boats speed to the clamming ground.

GHOST HOUSE.

I had always felt contented about that ghost,
There in her vine-shrouded house aside of the road;
I knew that the rag-stuffed panes were her special boast,
That she liked the tumble-down chimney of her abode;
She liked that old hat that hung in the tree in the lane,
And the scarecrow leaves that dribbled around in the rain;
The ivy that muffled the sills, a ghost would adore,
And she revelled in cobwebs the twisted staircase wore.

"The dear, mild thing," I thought, "she's the only one
In this glittering, piece-work world that can run a home;
No wonder the birds to her leaf-hung windows come,
No wonder the black mole tunnels the garden loam;
And there is revelry under her knotted boards
Where wild kittens hide and the grey squirrels rattle their hoards."

But some eager, figeting, worldlings came one day,
Moved into the house on a heavenly morning in May;
Of course the ghost could do nothing but move away.....
Lord, the cutting and hammering, planing and scrubbing and suds,
Lord, the paint and the polish, the grates and the curtains and duds!

The new-new beds, the cleanness and trimness and all,
I looked for the ghost in the mirror that shone in the hall;
I looked for her round the curve of the varnished stair,
I searched and called for her, wistfully, everywhere....

"And what will you do, dear ghost," was my whispered cry,
"And where will you live your shadowed revery?
Where do ghosts go when no longer they have a home,
Do they pile their effects in a van and begin to roam?
Shall you take to a haystack or sleep in the church's dome?"

Whether she heard me and thought it could not be true,

Or guessed that she might not trust me, the
ghost made no ado;
Though the pale grey thing may really have
cared that I knew,
At all events, she moved....and her shadowy
store
Of belongings exists for the world no more....

That house by the road, more correct, I think,
than most,
Has lost its chief charm.....It no longer has a
ghost.

SONG OF SCARLET.

The black-alder berries are thick this year,
(It's going to be cold);
Their scarlet trinkets, their necklaces bold
Hang on the shivering wind-swept year,
(It's going to be cold).

Now, the Commons are bare and the leaves whirl
around,
(It's going to be cold);
Like little brown sparrows flicked over the
around
(It's going to be cold);
But the black alder-berries like rubies embeaded
String out on the heath where the milkweed has
seeded,
(It's going to be cold).

Now the wind feels the blind and the roads look
severe,
(It's going to be cold);
And the locust tree's horned pods rattle and
shake,
And the small bony branches grow brittle and
break ....
But vitality lingers in reindeer moss,
And near the holm holly the thorn-berries toss,
The bright alder-berries gleam saucy and bold,
Pile up your wood-fires—who cares if it's cold?

PATHMAKER

(To Maria Mitchell)

In those eyes, dark as pools, the morning star
Must have lain long; on that calm breadth of brow
Must have been set some nobleness of vow
To distance and to space and all things far.
A little narrow street enshrines her now,
But through the world her planet pathways are
Blazed with her name; the constellate gates unbar
To those who, following, her star-cairns know.
Woman, who walked with Science to mark the lights
Along dark ways, thy luminous steps are dim;
Rapt on ethereal roads of satellites:
Art gazing still through space beyond the brim
Of sparkling nebula meadows to the nights
Of some New Radiance o'er still farther Rim?

PROPHECY MADE GOING "DOWN ALONG."

Don't tell, but I think there's a miracle today;
The Old North Church is full of Western light,
And the bush near by is afire; very bright
Shine the windows in the tower, for the last half hour
Some starlings have ranged there whistling and calling,
The barometer is falling,
It's Underground Moon this week, you know;
(Don't tell anybody I said so,
But I think there's a miracle today.)
Somewhere on the Island something's going to happen;
Don't ask me, I don't know anything about it.
Whatever I say I'd just as lief shout it,
(But there's going to be a miracle today!)
If there's any pass at all a-going your way,
Better say
(There's going to be a miracle today.)
Don't tell them who said so—they wouldn't like it, hey?
(But there's going to be a miracle today!)
I know it for sure, for I've stood for one hour
Watching those starlings in the North Church Tower.
So if you want a gam,
It's sure I am
That there's going to be a miracle today.
So that's the drift,
Though maybe they'll be miffed—
"He hasn't got the run of it," they'll say,
But—there's going to be a miracle today!

COAST YARN.

Skies pebbled with stars,
Sea, breathing like a sleeping animal,
Wind nuzzling wet shagginess of moors.
The coarse bright strains of an accordion,
Perversely stretched and shrunken
Against a wall of dark.

Brown faces, high cheekbones,
Polyglot sea-words;
A cold, dark swiftness;
Hardness of diligence
For shrewd, tight-fisted gain.

The Cranberry Pickers dance gravely
In squalid shacks on the moors,
And the greasy bottles pass
From old lips to young;
Rough doorways blurt out light;
White teeth, dark eyes shine.

There is chattering wharf talk
And garbled dock yard French;
Clamdiggers, Scallopers,
Fondle their dirty rolls
Of smoky dollar bills
And stride in booted ease.

COAST YARN

Out of the moorland night
She, saucily, slips in,
Thistledown on her hair;
Little, slim, ear-ringed, scarlet-bloused,
Her feet and impertinent breasts four mischievous mongrel words
In a universal language;
Her mouth gleams like berries,
Swamp-light in her eyes—

Someone clasps, someone curses—
Then screams; a knife .....
The sea, like an animal panting;
The sands, scared and white,
Broken barrels of cranberries
Strewn like unholy rosaries;
A man, stripped and bleeding,
Thrown overboard at midnight
Where the tide runs strong.

On a small brown neck
A long gold chain
To match new earrings!

BOUNCING BET.

Sauntering narrow lanes
Led by the weather vanes
See beneath narrow panes
Nantucket gardens
Where little fruit trees lean
On old walls grey and green
Dappling ivies screen
Nantucket Gardens.

All that is best and fair
Like old scent lingers there
Shrubs, herbs and ramblers share
The sweet disorders;
Tall tapered holly hocks
Foxglove and purple phlox
Demure mints, frilly stocks
Spike the box borders.

Yet—past the rose hung doors
Called by the tangled moors
Bouncing Bet left them.
On new strange roadways bound
Was the career she found
When she bereft them.

Ragged pink wilful thing—
You had to have your fling
With weeds to roister
You could not breathe the air
Of mignonette, nor care
For sweet peas cloister.

Only, these have a name
Theirs is the garden fame
They are traditioned;
Out on the dusty ways
Bouncing Bet weary strays
Quite ill-conditioned.

Yet I have heard the cry
Go up from passers-by,
Young, therefore tragic
Escaped,—the little word
To them is not absurd
They know its magic!

Therefore dear Bouncing Bet
You may have honor yet
Yours may be winning
But in your saucy pride
Though you would not abide
Gates, gardens, walls, beside;
Were your beginning.

TO THE NINETIES.

On Sundays when the church bells ring
Their island-towered summoning
I see the Nineties go
Gravely around the narrow cornered way
As they have gone for many a changing day
Steady and slow.

At twilight before window lights are lit
I see them, whitehaired, backward musing, sit
Beside their narrow pane
And then to me who wander through the streets
The new life with their olden living meets
And they are young again.

And always, by the great hearth's roaring fire
Or in the spring-lit street, or by the door
I hear their sober speech, with them live o'er
Old days, see the stiff backs that bow
Under the life so hard upon them now;
Yet frugal, busy, gathering up the Past
For memories that serve them to the last
Binding their faggots slow
Of what they know.

If e'er the turbulent world can settle down to live
If e'er we learn to suffer and forgive
To work hard with few pleasures and great faiths
We shall invoke these tottering, smiling wraiths
And we shall smile and whisper softly "true
It was the Old, who knew."

Note. One year when summer residents returned to Nantucket they were informed that there had been "a great falling off among the nineties" that winter; and it was noted that much vivacity and charm had gone from the island social gatherings.

STRUCTURES.

They have taken the old houses,
Lovingly they have taken them;
Bound up their wounds, bandaged their aching sides,
Made them soft friendships of pretty paint
And kindnesses of mortar....
They've made little paths this way
And little paths that way
And cosseted and crooned and coaxed and cared,
Till the old houses, the very old houses,
Stand up quite proudly with a dear and ancient pride.
All day long—all day long they meditate,
In spite of all the pretty paints;
In spite of all their mended ceilings, do they meditate
On the old houses, the very old houses
That they were when they died.

And so I suppose with the old ideas,
Rickety old ideas,
Heart-broken shapes that stand in field and sky;
Cleverly we re-paint them,
Cleverly decorate and give them quite new hinges,
And open them up and brick them in and hold them,
All that is good in them, away from ruin....

Yet, all year long the old ideas are walking,
All year long the old ideas are talking,
Talking through our every act and glance,
In spite of all our efforts to be new and useful,
In spite of all our efforts, we go acting
By the rickety old ideas,
The shapeless, bulged ideas,
The mildewed, damp ideas
That have died.

PSYCHOSCIENCE.

He, who is far from home, knows when the snow
Gives way before the sunny urge of Spring,
When the first ecstasies of bluebirds go
Through blossomed loops and boughs bee-murmuring,
When brier roses starrily compose
Upon the scented spray—he, homesick, knows.

He, that is far from love, knows when the face
That knew his face is raised to summer stars;
He, like that other, hungers in his place,
And, like that other, grips his prison bars—
And when that upturned face can no more smile,
He knows; and whispers comfort, mile on mile.

He, who feels far from God, knows when the Word
Comes light upon a golden-shadowed hill;
On his dim path the radiance has stirred,
Deep in a dream he shrines his knowledge; still
Keeping his thorny ways, intent he goes,
Knowing the Hidden that infinitely knows!

BEACON LIGHTS.

When I am cowardly, sick of the fight,
Dumb for the right word, nerveless for deeds that dare,
Blaze up in my heart, square little Brant Point Light;
Light me a broad path starred with a burnished flare!

If I am tossing on a sea of doubt,
And have no harbor, no fair shore to know,
Sankaty, like an angel, spread your great wings out,
Headland and coastward light, give me your glow!

If I am lost and waves go over me,
Tossing, engulfing hollows o'er my head;
Thou, Great Point Light, will surely cover me,
And by thy strong white clue I shall be led!

When I am caught in foam of treacherous beach,
And all the darkness presses like a wall,
Blaze, Island lights, beyond the Island reach;
Beacon me to the Utmost Light of all!

WHEEL.

The growing's finished. Down the garden ways
The Gardener comes, slow-trundling his barrow.

He brings a load of curious loamy mulch,
Brings tools that cut and stab the earth,
That lop the boughs from off full-blooded trees.

Under the falling leaves the Gardener stands,
Unshocked to see the tulip and the rose,
Red haw, brown seed-pod, lily staff and leaf—
All lying dead, extinguished, passionless.

The Gardener smiles to see the adventurous bee
Lying cold-killed under a broken stalk;
Smiles on a battered moth with frosted wing.

He spreads black clods of compost on the beds,
Sifts ashes all around the roots of trees,
Lops off, cuts back, prunes, digs away and kills.

Knowing how, out of the ruin and wreck,
Pure glowing things will come; new winged forms,
Trees that shall say new things to listening souls.

O Unseen Gardener of the World-tree, boughs
Ripe with strange star-fruit dropping in the fields

Of vast Space-gardens—give, Thou, me to learn
In simple ways, how, after this life's dream
I may accept new growth, even to loss
Of this life-consciousness—to help Thy plan!

Become, for Thee, a dried-up flower cup,
A butterfly unwingéd, broken-plumed,
Even a blinded, helpless, light-killed moth—
So that I nourish forth new growing things
In the star branchéd garden of deep Time!

Grant that this brain, that dares to dream of
Thee,
As Father, Friend—taught of the sentient
flowers,
Shall dream—dream on to some far endless end!

NANTUCKETER IN FRANCE.

They would take the hill next day—the order, he knew,
And the kind of hell the "taking" would be, he had seen;
So he spent the night awake and the hours flew,
As he pondered on the sort of man he had been,
And wondered what dying and doing it bravely would mean.
"The Eighty-second's coming along tonight!"
He remembered then. There were men in that regiment knew
His Island home. Men that were going to fight
For the moors he loved and the pines where arbutus grew.
Well—he thought he would like to pass them a word or two.

He thought he would like to see them, to talk of the hill
By Polpis Harbor, the grey little farm roofs slant;
Of the way the sunset flared through the fans of the Mill,
And the rolling moorland hiding the plover and brant,
And the scallopers sailing their boats through Autumnal chill.

He thought he would like to talk of the gilded dome
Of the Unitarian Church, of the cobbled square;
And speak with others sea-faring names of home,
Wondering, "Do they hear of the fighting there
Where Sankaty Light stands guard with its solemn flare?"

So he stood all night, on those dark hours of the earth,
Calling to men slogging by to heroic ends,
*Shouting: "*Nantucket,*" little grey town of his birth;
Palely he stood there, anxious as one who sends
S. O. S. scanning the night for friends.

"*Nantucket!*" he hailed—but the river of men rolled by,
Every eye set grim towards its Mecca of bloody drench;
No answering Island voice took up his cry
But his own soul answered. He went back to his trench
Resolving how a Nantucket man would die!

*A true incident.

FISHING ON STEAMBOAT WHARF.

High all our prisons,
We can no more out;
Words meant to free us,
Compass us about;
And a sigh means a laugh
And a hymn a battle shout.

But here silence mellows
Starved being into life;
With these dreamy fellows—
Rod, reel and jack-knife—
Even the caught fish are blithe.

Green water laps the spiles,
The silence is golden;
Every little whiles
I am beholden
To a sea captain
Of a time olden.

He puts on the bait
Of quahog, that gets me
A bright little flipper,
Or a plaice fish nets me;
That I'll haul in a whale
He occasionally bets me.

FISHING ON STEAMBOAT WHARF

Silence and fishing,
Sun, understanding;
Fun to see off-islanders
Tack in and miss their landing.
Quiet winks exchanged
While tobacco you're handing.

No boasting here,
No meanness with minnows;
Commonwealth of Bait
Debts only finn-owes;
And a great quiet kindness
And much color blindness.

Maybe it comes from
Looking down so deep,
Where much is hidden
And much lies asleep;
With your eyes on the line,
Given you to keep.

Quiet pipes lit,
Quiet eyes reflective,
Rips a silver fish
From out the perspective;
To go fishing on the wharf
Is my one great Objective!

THE WALLACE DAISY FIELD.

Slim pointed pickets guard the summer dream,
Glimpsing behind their lichen-scrolléd bars;
Young shapes of white that in ethereal stream
Toss starry incense to the summer stars.
Ranked slender acolytes in harbor lane,
Communion bear to many a churchless breast;
Processional in falling summer rain,
Recessional to gold and Gothic West.

Only a daisy field—yet one man's care
Enshrines it in immaculate gated reach;
Inviolate flowers veil them mistily there,
Spreading like moonlight to the moonlit beach..
Where the white patens disk the tabled green
Is read the sacred Word of sea and skies;
Chapelled within this occult daisy screen
Is Sacrament for beauty-loving eyes.

YOUTH AND THE OLD MILL.

YOUTH

Old Mill, grind me corn
For my house by the thorn,
For I'm with the old folk,
Where the pigs in the poke
And the cows in the barn
And the peat's on the stone
And the latchstring out-thrown....
Old Mill, grind me corn
For the winter morn.

OLD MILL

No grain can I grind thee, Modern Child,
My sails are tattered,
My grind stones scattered;
My cranks are riddled
With rust defiled....
But I'll turn you a dream,
A Grey-Town dream,
At which many have smiled
And been beguiled.

YOUTH AND THE OLD MILL

YOUTH

Turn me a dream then, doughty Mill,
Flaring there on your windy hill
With your rickety arms spread on the sky;
Black crows from the cornfields passing you by,
Near the burying-ground where the Quakers sleep,
And the sailors home from the ranging deep
Turn me a dream, you strange old Mill,
Keeping your watch on the windy hill.

OLD MILL

Shall I turn you a dream of the Town Crier calling
His news 'gainst the tempest bawling?
Shall I turn you a dream of Three Vikings sailing
The rim of a low lying island hailing....?
Turn you a dream of a Smuggler grim
And the underground path for his mates and him?
Of Three forms walking a midnight road
To a lonely farmhouse where one light showed
And a paper signed with a white quill pen
That helped bring freedom to slave-born men?
Of a man who made a telescope
And lassoed the stars with a mental rope—

Of the woman who worked in a cottage
small,
Whose name in science leads them all?
Of a knight who came and built a school?
Of a woman who broke a cast iron rule?
Of the Quaker forms and the gentle ways
That ruled all war out of the ways?
Of the Indians, watching the sun go down?
Of the whalers and gold seekers of renown?

YOUTH

Nay, Old Mill, I laugh in your face;
Turn me no dream of a Quaker past,
Turn me no dream of the tranquil ways,
Turn me a dream for my own tense days,
Turn me a dream for my cherishing—
A dream for believing;
A dream for my strength!

OLD MILL

Shall I turn you a dream for your loneliness?
A dream of the star-scattered faces about
you,
And the plans and pleasures and pains that
flout you?
Shall I tell of the voices that you must hear
Before some one Voice calls you clear?
(But whatever it be—for joy and sadness
Or triumph, defeat, or grief or gladness—
That I cannot know,
Said the Old Mill very low.)

YOUTH

Nay, Old Mill, if you know the voices
That make for a bold life's chance and choices,
Turn me that dream!

OLD MILL

Only the sound of one voice, you shall hear,
A Voice that has known your soul forever;
A Voice that has called you and kept you wherever
You failed or won in your high endeavor—
The Voice of your Dream!

YOUTH

O Mill, give me no mystery;
I know the way of human history—
Turn me true dreams!

OLD MILL

Only the dream of Beauty, I know,
The long sky paved with the afterglow;
The moonlaced bog and the shimmering seas,
The floating mist through moorland trees;
The quiet color of twilight dunes,
The night heron croaking its ebb-tide runes;
The black-walled sky and the star-strung vines,
The pooling spread of the Island pines.
And the Sea's voice borne on the salt mist breath,

Where the chained arbutus wandereth....
The strange glad swerve of the moorland road
And the great black shoulder of the wood..
(Only these things I know,
Said the Old Mill very low.)

YOUTH

Then Old Mill, since no dream you grind me
A dream of my own I will surely find me!

But as Youth weaves and catches the threads
Of a hundred human joys and dreads,
Youth sees the Old Mill standing there,
High on the hill with the West aflare..
And dark as it looms on the sky, it seems
The Old Mill steadily turns out dreams—.
"All's well," grinds the grave Old Mill;
"All's well," grinds the brave Old Mill;
"If your eyes and your heart hold loveliness,
And your mind and your soul know faithfulness,
And your eyes and your hands know steadiness....
You shall walk straight over the rim of the years
To the Vivid Land of all conquered fears;
With your heart set true and your eyes set straight,
You will grind good dreams from the grist of fate."
(But that's all I know,
Said the Old Mill very low.)

SCISSORS GRINDER.

"'Twas long ago they said
Of the country whence I came,
"Greece is a dream that is dead,
Athens only a name!"
Yet on this April day
As I go through the towns,
I see soft Thessaly
On these New England downs.
I see the lilied plains
Where the white cranes droop their bills;
And the moving cattle trains
Winding into the hills;
While the farmer drums his bees,
And the donkey shakes his bells
Under the olive trees
Where the Bay of Corinth swells,
To great blue-silver gate
Where the sea-bound temples wait,
And the Eleusinian way
Mistily winds the bay.
On Knossos' shady knolls
I see the columned tiers;
And the cool Ionic scrolls
Throb to Olympian cheers.
I see a gravelled stream
Winding Olympian reeds;

SCISSORS GRINDER

Again the Scythian dream
Its wagoned people leads.
The river-god drifts on,
Raising a poppied head;
A pipe sounds halcyon—
Nothing of Greece is dead....!

But I, who walk the towns
To sharpen knives at the gate,
Feel sharper knives in the frown
Of this New World's estimate!

WHISPERS.

What was it the wind said,
Blowing from the Orient
To the Cross on the hill,
And the fans of the Mill?
What was it the wind said,
Blowing at twilight,
To New England?

The wind that blew from the East
Blew dreamily,
A low song and strange song had the sea.
The Islanders sought each other's eyes,
And young men dreamed enterprise;
Then sails put from the shores,
And wives stood alone at the doors;
For the old world, the strange world, called
To New England!

White sails stole out
On the silver sound,
They ran into storms
Outward bound;
They could not stay home
And they would not turn back,
For the Old World,
The dim world,
Called to New England!

Now, in the old house
Where the chimneys stretch wide,
Young wives talk by the fireside;
On the walls there is Delft,
And the lacquered trays,
Jades, teak and teapots,
Fans of gallant days;
China, tortoise and pearl,
Ivory carved like lace;
Chuddah, Cashmere, Sandal,
In some secret place....
And what say the young wives,
The frank young wives,
To the stranger's face?

"No one guessed how they knew,
Nor what the wind said,
And the sailors are gone
And the merchants are dead;
But the toppling summer sea,
And the pale blue winter world,
Came often and oft again,
And the years like sails furled.
Men died on the ships
And were buried at sea,
Men languished on wild coasts,
Lost in mystery...."

No one knows what was said
Nor what answered again,
When the wind blew a strange way,
The wind blew a new way,
For Nantucket men,
And the Old World called to New England!"

NOT THE GIFT BUT THE GIVER.

Suppose that o'er the blue thin circling line
Where low clouds sleep, some figure-head should shine;
White swelling sails spread out on fan-streaked skies,
And a new vessel in the west should rise.
Suppose this vessel, from untraveled zones,
Through savage suns and fierce Eurocyldons
Should bring me deeply buried in its hold
A mystic gift of jewels and blazing gold.
And, having safely brought the precious thing,
Should spread its sail, augment each shining wing,
And calmly, like a night-bird through the stars,
Speed on again, crossing the distant bars;
Then through the mists go out before my eyes,
Leaving me standing there beside the prize.
I, left on lonely shores, would ever mourn
The messenger that sailed beyond the bourne;
I, left on lonely shores, would only pray
To see again the ship that sailed away.
I, searching the horizon's purple round,
Would follow ships, hither and thither bound,
Longing for this—to see the dim prow lift,
That brought to me my longing with my gift.

And so with thee, who broughtest me thy truth
Ablaze with jewels, alight with mystic signs,
Then vanished. Lo! with what utter ruth,
The sorrow of my gift my soul divines.
Holding with yearning talismans of thee,
Who hath passed on beyond the touch of me.

THE BALL.

How do we see our world—
Formless? Vague?
A rude sphere hurled through space?
A green kaleidoscope of trees,
And the flash of seas?
And life and movement in every place?

I see my world with color wet;
With the golden sap
Pushing the green to the ardent sky.
I see the ripeness, the warmth of fruits,
Round to the sun, plumed melody,
The clasp and the subtleties of roots;
I see gods walk on the morning hills,
Up the dappled brooks and the secret lanes
And vistas leading to ferny haunts,
Where the vivid crimson cardinal flaunts
In calm of tree-pillared fanes.

I see my world star-fretted, caught
In the web of enchained eternities—
With the age-old moon on her stair, cloud wrought,
Climbing the night-sky's precipice;
I see the silver wheel of tides,
The night spell hid in the forest breast,
The gold splashed dawn that gravely glides
Over grey mountain crest.

THE BALL

O World, whirling out with the sun,
And holding us, everyone,
When the golden skies twilighted lean
To the purple hills—What have they seen,
Who were born, still blind, in a web of days,
To thy lessons written in simple ways?
Dull streets choked with dusty forms?
Crowds and houses and groups and swarms
Who strive, and lose, and are gone again?
A world of sordid women and men?
A crowd of petty and dull and mean?
Not a flower face nor a splash of green—
Unless—O world, they have seen it all—
The miracle of thy Wonder-Ball!

THE TOWN CLOCK GIVES ADVICE TO THE TOURIST.

If you walk on Main Street,
Turn your fancy loose,
Out of lace and lacquer
You may pick and choose;
Poetry of race and clan,
Demure maid and solemn man,
All the lore is stored away
In these houses brick and grey.
Puritan and worldly wise
Trod these stones that meet your eyes;
Hoary old aristocrats,
Old chairs, parrots, lace and cats;
Old umbrellas, ivory canes,
Whale and ship for weather vanes;
Soldiers' Monument and bank,
Shops and studios in rank;
New sails spread or old sails furled....
Main Street's where you meet the World!

If you turn in Salem Street,
Better have a care;
The Law is on your left
And the red jail is there.
They don't burn witches
But you'd better beware!

THE TOWN CLOCK GIVES ADVICE TO THE TOURIST

If you walk on Whale Street,
Roll some in your gait;
Make believe that caravels
For your coming wait;
Square-rigged and clipper-built,
Wind jammer and schooner,
Will bear you off on cruises
If not later, sooner!

On North Water Street
Salt creeps into speech;
Looking down the little lanes
You will see the beach.
All along North Water Street,
Please to make a note,
All that's worth saying
Is said about a boat.

If you walk on Milk Street,
Keep your wits about you;
Don't let any saucy star
On Vestal Street scout you.
Curtsey to the Old Mill,
Snatch a rose from arbor;
Milk Street's a nice street
To come in harbor.

If you walk through Pleasant Street,
You are sure to see
Many brilliant knockers
Shine reflectingly;
Gardens full of spicy bloom,
And real ladies taking tea.

THE TOWN CLOCK GIVES ADVICE TO THE TOURIST

If you go through Orange Street,
You will have a glance
At Japanese poetry
And English romance;
You'll smell paint, hear some radio,
And see among the wise
A scholar with a Christian's face,
And two great grey eyes.

If you walk through Centre Street,
You will surely meet
A true, true, woman
With voice and manner sweet;
And there the windows fairly talk,
And the fences are so neat.

If you walk through Lily Street
The sunset's at the end
Honeysuckle claims you
Like an old friend;
And quaintly blocked upon the skies
Old houses on "Gull Island" rise.

If you walk through Quince Street,
Never stand and stare,
Hollyhocks will ask you
To go otherwhere;
Apples growing you may see,
Raspberry and pear tree;
Wisdom and a pretty wit
If you know where to look for it.

If you walk through Joy Street,
Take a little heed

THE TOWN CLOCK GIVES ADVICE TO THE TOURIST

To keep a fairly sober air,
Dignity you'll need;
There's something about Joy Street
Goes to the head indeed.

And when you are in Gay Street
Choose a sober pace,
Clematis along the fence,
Shakes its stars like lace;
And twinkling little cups of flowers
Toss in a sheltered place.

If you look for money,
There's New Dollar Lane,
And Mill Street, another street
With a pirate pointing vane;
Consulting maps and other code
You'll find the Thousand Dollar Road!

And last of all, wherever you walk,
Stagger through Stone Alley,
Slip along the cobbled stone,
Slide methodically;
Honeysuckle may evade,
Birds shilly-shally,
But a good place to meet a maid
Is in Stone Alley.

How e'er you walk in any street,
Wear a pleasant smile
As if you hoped to meet a dream
Before the next mile—
And you may find that dream
Waiting by a stile!

CUP.

I walked among them with my cup of blue;
It was aflame sometimes, and sometimes trembled
With sweet of all the exquisite things I knew.
Yet was I feared to tell the draught, dissembled,
My wish to have these strangers taste the brew
That to my lip all sky and sun resembled.

I walked among them, holding up my grail;
Holding it steady, bidding to the drinking.
It was the best I knew; luminous, pale,
Changeful and fiery in its bubbled winking;
I watched its vital depth grow warm and sunny,
Ethereal-bitter—sometimes sweet as honey.

I walked among them with my cup of blue;
They laughed and turned to chatter at my rapture.
"What cup is this," they asked, "of simple brew?
What un-sure Wine, what grail of dullard's capture?
This is no drink to slake our fevered dryness;
This mead for us would hold but acid wryness."

I walk among them with my azure bowl,
To fete and market-place and to the threshing;
Today there is no feast, there is no soul
But craves the cup I bring, nor its refreshing,
And yet in vain I raise my flashing beaker
And pledge my toast—to Truth and the Truth Seeker!

TO ABRAM QUARY

(The Last Indian on Nantucket)

When the long shadows fell across the wind,
And the dense sheep moved grayly on the moor,
How was it with you, Island Amerind,
Sitting dream-bound beside your Shimmo door?
Did tides that curved the ripples to that shore
Remind you that somewhere the Source must be
That sent you, outward ripple of a race half spent—
Bewildered son of hidden continent?

Dark, dying Indian, with grave hand bowed
In untaught dreaming of dark ancestry,
Saw'st coast and vineyard and the stalwart crowd
Of young red men embarking on the sea?
Or up great rivers in some land of rain,
In swift canoes chasing the brilliant feather,
Or dancing God-thoughts in the harvest weather?

All gone? No trail? No scrolléd birch barks sign
To hand the tale from father down to son?
What meaning was in totems' reptiled line?
What old taboo in crest and trophy won?
What mightiest Chieftain led the hunting bout
Or what dark Sachem fathered all the swarms
Of circled fire lights' solemn squatting forms?

TO ABRAM QUARY

Maybe the Outward Trail was marked with stars
That shone of old in ancient weather book;
Perhaps old campfires lit old forest scars,
Or in the sky where some Great Spirit shook
A mighty spear: perhaps thy brothers stayed
To welcome thee, when stern and unafraid
Thy moccasined feet fared those mysterious trails
That Aqueous Time like clear brook water veils.

3 A. M.

He came and sat with me, that One
Whom we so fear. And as I looked
Closer upon him, lo! I felt
Myself unfearing. "Death," I asked,
"Why is it that no man hath read,
Nor understood thee?" Then he gazed
With that dark glory of his eyes,
Answering: "If men could know
How I yearn toward them; if they saw
The things that I would show them; Yea,
Could trust, accept, come to me kind,
Like little children! It were well!
'Twere well, indeed, if this could be.
"I am afraid of Life," said Death, and smiled at
me.

ON THE JETTY.

Still the old rage, O Sea?
Blue lightnings buried under snowy shock
Of white foam-bodies dying on the rock;
Such sobbing passion to be still more free—
Still the old yearning....Sea?

Still the old secret....Sky?
Cloud galleons sailing for some coast of Dream,
And robber winds a-gallop for the gleam
Of Western gold where purple banners fly—
Still the old questing....Sky?

Still the old bondage....Heart?
Slave to a beauty that defeats the mind;
Enchained, whose bondage even yet may find
True words, the whole glad wonder to impart
Meaning of Sea and Sky and Thee....O Heart!

WINDROW.

Old figures in a lane,
Toward the grey church going;
Vines tapping on a pane,
Strong wind blowing.

Old comers by a lane,
Heads bowed and hoary;
Stiff knees and tapping cane,
Wind knows the story.

Old patterns in a lane,
Toward the grey church going;
Follow through veils of rain,
Brown leaves blowing.

Old blooming through the lane,
Pods, grey and brittle;
Wind ....bring all back again—
Young, gay, little!

THE SWIMMER.

Tonight the ocean calls,
The stars respond, wide-scattered through the skies;
Swift through the cool of curling wave he hies,
Who swims far out, nor sees the shore receding—
Only his strength, his long bold measures heeding.

Proud in his power, strong,
From hateful touch of hands that haunt him, free
He plunges forward through dark wastes of sea,
Passionate in the careless joy of roaming
Through billowed gulfs, forgetful of his homing.

Tranced in the summer night,
Lying far out on the high-breasted deep,
He dreams alone. Lo! In illumined sleep,
White Naiads gleam in dim sea-groves and hollows,
Under the tide-drawn heaving path he follows.

Until the stars slip down,
And to far shores the pale night drifts away;
Then he turns back to meet the break of day,
Through the broad surges in blind rapture leaping,
Until he feels the sand and the foam creeping.

IN THE ANTIQUE SHOP.

All day the silver-headed craftsman bends
Over the broken chain, the gemless rings,
The voiceless clock, the fragile fan, and mends
With delicate fingers rare broken things.
I gaze on him, on gems and glimmering gold,
See light restoring touches, magic skill;
Till to my heart come strange imaginings
Of ruined lives I know, shattered and still.
O Craftsman! Here is mettle, dull and old;
Look on these broken lives. Can'st thou remold?
Can'st thou, with color, love designs refill—
Bring beauty out of sorrow's patternings?

THE CARDINAL FLOWER.

Wrapped in his crimson gown and cowl,
Beside her slender form he stood;
There by the grassy brook they strayed,
And sun-rise thrush and moonlight owl
Knew that she listened while he wooed.

So blue her eyes, so golden fell
The sunny hair about her face;
She stepped with delicate sweet pride
Along the grasses, close beside
The brook's cool lily-shadowed place.

"It was a shame that they should go
Thus side by side, at last to part,"
Earth said: "Mine all this color now,
Her soft blue eyes, gold hair and brow,
The red blood in his ardent heart."

Men say, "They died." They passed away;
I am not sure what trail they took.
But where the grasses bend and sway,
Red Cardinal flower burns its way—
Forget-me-nots grow in the brook.

WILD BIRD.

I said I had tamed them all and caged them,
The myriad birds of my dream;
Called them by docile names and paged them,
With law and precept I engaged them,
And I sat with my tame birds all around me—
Sat where you others came and found me.

See, here is Ardor—his wings are clipped;
And here is Truth (with spotted breast);
Imagination, preening her plumes;
Adventure, stolid, in golden barred rooms—
My myriad birds, my wild birds of no name,
"All tame (like yours) I said—all tame now,
Tame....."

And I sat with you, friends, and was suffered of you:
"The Bird-Fancier has tamed her birds—no fears."
And I sat with you, listening through my tears.

For there was one wild bird (one I left wild, to see
That there ever had been with me such as he)—
One wild bird, clean as the sky—and free....

WILD BIRD

There come cries sometimes—black ducks, grey
gulls,
Plover, wild swan, sickle billed curlews;
There are long dotted streamers across the sky
Of freedom and quest that cannot die....
There come songs.....
And I sit and smile, with my tame birds preening,
From my window leaning.....

Then he flies by the casement....
A stir of wings—a shape on the stars;
My head lifted, my heart on fire....

"My soul on your wings—Wild Bird!"

SABATIA POND.

Where the soft circle of Sabatia stars
The water grasses in a sprinkled arc;
And golden ripples break on sandy bars,
And thin blue sails of dragon flies embark—

I think each year, how many sunsets weep;
That day must die; and tinted tears must fall
There where pond ripples to white clethra creep,
And where the margin's sweet with honey-ball.

I think that where those sky-tears placid lay,
That golden evening stars have also lain;
Reflected on the rosy surface, they
Have dreamed a dream, and wandered on again.

So, where the sunset clouds in sorrow crept,
Now rosy shapes through water grasses trail;
And on that bed where gypsy starlight slept,
Is left a rose-colored star-patterned veil.

THE LOST DRYAD.

I am a lost dryad,
Wandering tranced in the lovely blossoming wood,
Following paths where the shy bright berries wait,
Entering glades where the birds have secrets and nests....
I am a lost dryad!

One came who woke me and bade me come forth,
Gladly I stepped from the tree and put out my hand;
Gladly, like children, we hurried forth to the sun,
But our play was only begun ere a bitter Will had hushed it—
I am a lost dryad!

I cannot go back to the Tree—the bark is mended and closed,
I cannot remain in the wood for the flowers are dumb and reproachful;
The birds are afraid to have my eyes on their nests,
The brooks have closed their waters like windows that gleam.....
I am a lost dryad!

And so I wander in smiling pride of my state,
Purer than woodland things that will have none
of my pureness;
Wiser than human things that do not reck of my
wisdom;
Lost in the dream of a thing that was dimly
shown me,
Bewildered, though calm, broken and proud like a
princess—
I am a lost dryad!

Ye who listen in the trees, O, never come forth
Unless ye have spells to bind the Intruder unto
thee.
Unless ye have spells to hold the Enchantment
forever,
Stay in your tree prisons—there at least there
are weavings
And pleasant sense as of home and things
familiar.
I go wandering forever, alien and speechless,
Chance that broke the bark of the tree is form-
less and vanished;
Now the healed heart of my home no longer
opens—
I am a lost dryad!

PATTRAN.

Does the Moon love best
When the trees write fortunes on the West?
When the webs are done,
All the milkweed spun,
And when brown roads up to the blue sky run?

Does the Moon love best
When the budding creeps from the sunny South
Where the crocus leaps,
And the robin cheeps,
And the earth is a-blossom with rain-wet mouth?

Does the Moon love best
The wild winds driving out of the North?
The hazel rod,
And the brown seed-pod,
And the Autumn censers swinging forth?

Oh! the Gypsy Moon,
Wandering ways so silverly!
Hers is the love of cricket-shoon,
And wigwam corn,
And the smell of morn,
And October grasses on vagrom dune!

ROOF-TREE.

Far from the highway stands the empty home,
With unhinged door and warped and shrunken
stair;
Over its walls the chilly shadows roam,
Rank to its lintels huddled ivies come;
Past its blind face the startled swallows fare.

Wrapped in its memories, it stands aloof,
Strange to itself, patient in wind and rain;
No tender hearth-breath curls around its roof,
No voice within welcomes or calls reproof;
No child's face peers behind the cobwebbed pane.

Let us not wonder why—we shame it more
With echoing voice and stir. Let us depart,
Turning in pity from the hapless door,
Closing the dumb gate in awed silence, for
This is the dead hope of a human heart.

EVENING AT FRANKLIN VALLEY FARM. 1918.

The lantern throws a wavering shadow round
The umber aisles; the cows in stanchions rowed
Turn their soft gaze, their curving horns surround
The fragrant tossing of their rustling food;
Their limpid eyes, their breathing, slow, profound,
Seem on some great unworded Theme to brood—
Some evenness of sky and solitude,
Or placid pool or hill with maples crowned.

From stall to stall the horses' darkling eyes
And upflung heads connote our interlude;
And scenting nostrils whicker their surprise
At human forms that on this peace intrude;
The shadows smell of milk, and straw, and rude
Farm implements accent the lantern-patch;
Ringed globules tremble on the bundled thatch,
Leaping to dusky beam and rafter wood.

Past horned head and ponderous chestnut flank,
The fitful light-dance swings along the floor,
And wanders to the star-specked aqueous blank

Made by the sliding open of the door;
A snowy feather, where the pigeons soar,
Wavers adown, and odors keen and rank
Filter through darkness of a Minster-grey
Where filmy cobwebs swim along the hay.

Perhaps these beasts of burden wait once more
For Wise Men, and a Shining all around,
To see Redemption by the Manger door,
Illumined faces on the rushy ground;
Perhaps they draw their slow breath, tranced and bound,
Instinctly taught that they new forms shall wear,
Who shall some day be swift, no burdens bear,
And have their tongues made eloquent in sound.

But, if the hallowed shining does not come,
And they look through the dark with unchanged stare,
And if those great grave mouths stay always dumb,
'Twill not be ignorance but some truth they share;
Who have no doubts, no clamorings and no fears,
But faithful to the clumsy guise they wear,
Walk patient down their plodding driven years.

While we in princedoms of our God's own form,
Wistfully pause in their oblivioned light,
Longing to stay with uncouth beasts tonight;
For that their calm would keep our spirits warm
And soothe us back to the glad human norm.
Would gladly share with them their sacred things,

Their freedom from our restless questionings,
So we won quietude from stress and storm.

Mingling our vigil with their Burden-Speech,
Their revery.
We would take of that wisdom they can teach,
Learn how this comes to be....
That brooding in the silent darkness here,
Slaves of a labor lasting all the year,
They, and not we,
Become the Masters of Tranquility!

VISION.

I saw the Search-light, like a seraph, fly
Over the water's moved mysterious face,
Bridging the harbor, pushing darkness by,
Pouring its flood upon a far-off place.

I thought—no gleam can travel where they wait,
No human light throws silver on their shore;
Their crystal Sea's unmargined like the great
Love which they know, and rest in evermore.

I thought—no light can show the flowers they bear,
Their heaven-looks, the tender things they say;
No light reveals the raiment that they wear,
Nor all the bliss of their unwearied Day.

And yet, who knows? So long have yearning men
Turned to those borders searching, wistful, gaze;
What stainless light may flash upon our ken,
What glorious faces smile at our amaze?

Dim reaches wait, untrodden shores exist,
The sea of Death completes the solemn scheme;
But comes the light to sweep away the mist,
And comes the heart to rightly read the Dream.

* * * *

I see the Search-light in the years to come,
Moving anew on borders strange and far;
I see new coast lines set with lights of home,
Men's faces turned toward a near-burning Star.

LOST BEAUTY.

Because my fathers did, I seek my bed
While winter night over my dreaming head
Opens its gorgeous book of trees and stars
Upon a world that sleeps. The Eastern bars
Are crossed by ships, all constellation shaped,
That sail the winter hills where snowy trees are
draped.
So I, whose muscles and whose blood are bound
To this faint-hearted scheme of life, do pray
Those that come after me, that they shall found
Some life that does not sever night and day;
So when God's fleet sweeps up the midnight skies,
His starry ships will hail unsleeping eyes.

THE BRANCH OF STRANGE BERRIES.

(An Old Man Tells a Story to Some Boys.)

Black tunnels grooved the sea
Into caves of night;
And the furrowed walls of foam
Were jagged chrysolite.
No star stayed to chart the way—
We shuddered, lurching on boiling spray
In piteous plight of swinging stay
And black sails torn to flapping rags,
Blowing in knots and bellying bags.

I could not sleep; I walked with the salt
Caking in rifts on my face,
And I heard my men up in the bows
Cursing our dreary case.
They ground their bitter words in their jaws
As we reeled in the furred seas' tigress paws.

Paladin came with his eyes of omen,
His loose mouth hanging dry:
"Senor," he said, "We men leave women—"
He turned and sneered at the sky—
"Maybe your love is the love of the ghost
That shrieks your name from a rock-cursed coast,
But we know there's no land like the land thou
dreamest—
No land like thy boyish fancy deemest....

"Man, if thou knowest the way, turn back
Over the lost and surging track.

The men are mad for the food they lack,
Two ships are lost, the water-skins sag;
Scurvy's aboard, the torn sails drag....
St. Mary! Thou knowest there is no land
Offers food nor place for our starving band;
Thou and thy dupes our lives have hurled
White bones on the reef of a Western World.
With your jewel-bought quadrants and King-got-
gold
Our homes and kith and kin ye have sold...."

Paladin whined: "Turn back, turn back
Over the lost and tossing track;
Up from this dreaming, silly and slack."

I turned on him, I shook my head,
Through burned and bleeding lips I said:
"Sail on...." "Sail on," I said.
(Though it seemed to me I spoke from the dead),
"Sail on—Sail on," I said.

Then came all terrible wolves of that crew,
Staring at me—half dead, they knew;
Yet maddened because my words were few.
The blood was gone from their hanging skins,
The rags hung dank on their horny shins;
They mouthed and muttered: "His eyes roll wild,
He babbles now like a peevish child.
O shame, thou madman, thou dangerous Mind,
That dreams of a country we do not find;
While we with the blazing sea go blind....
Art minded to sail till the last one's dead....?"

"Sail on....Sail on...." I said.

All night we climbed those seas that mounted,
Towering to skies that nightly counted
The empty coin of the foreign stars;
We saw foam rips on the rock-reefed bars,
The sea shuttles kept up their ghastly heaving
On looms of white their black cloth weaving,
And I thought that they wove me a winding sheet
That slowly wrapped me from head to feet....

Day after day the salt spray caked
On my sunken eyes that burned and ached,
And the curses fell as my body fell;
I lay slant like a corpse on the all-day swell,
(Were it day or night, I could not tell),
But they called for my blood—yea, their knives
were keen
For the blood of a man, whose fault, I ween
Was: "He sailed for a country he had not seen."

Day by day muttered hate; thick slime
Oozing from mouths that judged my crime,
Till they told me: "You die!" And set the time.
I crawled to the bow and looked out ahead
For the time was short and the land I dreamed
Hidden, but near, me-seemed.
And then—Jesu!—atop one foaming wave
The Miracle rode—the Carvéd Stick,
Knobby and rough, its black bark brave
Notched with rough taboo words and signs
Of living beings—strange words and lines....

And then—O Mother of God! it sailed—
The branch of strange berries, its long bough trailed
On a wave that broke where the sunlight paled.
Red toppling balls on the white sea-crest
That heaved it up from the shining West,
And bore it straight to my sobbing breast.

The Branch of Strange Berries sailed forth to me
For the sign of Land and fecundity!

Shuddering, staggering as one dead,
I heard them....“Land....Land....Land....” they said.
“Land!” they shrireked and again they shrieked;
The wallowing caravel's timbers creaked
And I sank down on the deck quite dumb,
For my answering miracle had come.
The unbelievable Land was there;
It slowly loomed on the atmosphere.
Oh, the dim, dark, strange, unspeakable shore,
Fringed out on the blue....! Then I heard them roar,
“San Salvador.....San Salvador.....!”
They tossed up their arms, they leaped on the deck,
Black faces grinned through crusted fleck;
Bloody-bearded eye and skeleton hand
Pointed me....“Senor....Senor....Land!”
Water they brought in an olive wood cup—
The last roiled drops; to my feet they crept,
And laughed and kissed me, and raved and wept,

And my fame they sang (I, who had been
Believer in things I had not seen).

Judge of me, God, that I never quailed,
But that as through hell and horror we sailed,
"Sail on....Sail on...." I said.
Judge of me, God, who, when I cried
For sign, sent the carved stick overside,
And the Branch of Strange Berries that rode the tide.
And pardon my sins, for I was, I ween,
True to the Country I had not seen....

Then, Jesu....judge of those whose speed
To those new fair shores was confident greed,
(Now that of courage there was no need);
Who called me "Master" and called me "Friend,"
When the bitter doubting was at an end....
Pity all men whose fate has been—
"They steer for a Country they have not seen!"

FROM A WINDOW.

On other quiet summer nights like these,
I have leaned forth where honey-suckles pressed
The twilight pane, and watched the priory West
Send forth its cowled clouds over purple seas—
Seeing, through eve-blurred glass, the waters rise
Beyond sea-lavender's fringed traceries;
Worshipping, as I worship now, the Sign
That God and Earth are ever one Divine.

Only, the flower of lily in the green,
The scarlet feathered black-bird in the sedge;
Even the white shell by the water's edge,
Seem to have seen God—whom I have not seen.
Yet with these wistful eyes that may not know,
Let me dare every doubt and darkness. So,
Walking blind roads, spanning all voids, I tread
Earth's flowing Beauty to its Fountain Head.

RESPONSIBLE.

I looked over the purple fields and out to the sun-
lit sea
And the curve and waft of a gull's white wing
was solace enough for me;
And I had signals from tall green grass and the
light of sand on the beach,
But I heard the laughter of girls together,
Young and vibrant with sunlit weather,
Laughter of skyward reach.
And hurrying by with ardent paces,
I saw anticipance on their faces....
Wisdom no age can teach.
Youth with unconscious gleam and shining
Kept its eyes on a glad divining,
Keyed to the tall cliff reach;
I saw the bloom of these girls together,
Bloom as of grape and peach;
And they plained of the wearying wars of men,
Quivering...."Give us our world again.
Give us the youth that shall clasp us close,
Give us the heart of the perfumed rose,
Life is our gift while the world is young;
Shall our eyes be blinded, our song unsung?
Give us our destiny of yore—
Do ye pour us all in your Hopper-of-War?"

Only the young girls down on the beach;
But out to the world their voices reach,
Voices of maidens over the dune,

RESPONSIBLE

Flickering back in a windy rune:
"Give us our oldtime destiny,
Our tall young mates and our babes to hold;
Is life for us a tale that is told....
Caught in your Battle-Industry?
Shall we grow wrinkled and pale and old,
Pouring the lead and smoothing the bore
In munition moulding forevermore?
Shall our slender fingers pick lint and bands
For the shell-shocked eyes and the frozen hands?
Shall we give our youth for the killing of men,
And turn us to blood and hating again?
Give us our destinies of yore,
Give us our homes by city and shore....
Do ye pour us all in your Hopper-of-War?"

Then I saw the sky in a passion of grey
Sweep them with fog and shut them away;
And their voices seemed to die with the years,
And the mist dripped round them with furtive
tears;
And the waves, wild foaming from tidal deep,
Stiffened and blanched in their curling leap.
And a bird, mist-baffled with heavy wing,
Beat on the chill air wavering....
And I watched the young forms wistful go
Where the foggy fields stretched dun and low;
And their eyes were heavy with solemn woe.
While far up the beach and across the sea,
The voices of youth cast a curse on me;
And the ancient weed on the windblown shore
Bared me the barren breast of War.

TREE WORSHIP.

My room has great windows,
Clear water-like windows
Awash with golden sun;
My books shine green and red,
And the bed is white as milk;
The rugs flecked like a brook,
And the shelf holds a silver bowl
And a candle of honey-gold.

But I look out of the room,
Away from the wine-red books,
To one gaunt shag-bark tree
That stands playing itself
Like a swaying cloud-keyed Harp,
Or writing upon the sky.
With a myriad twig-keen pens.

My room has a cushion, soft
As sea foam on the sand;
But I look out on the tree—
It draws me, holds me, speaks,
And does not speak; is still,
Dumb, yet singing and glad.

And I know that I, in the room,
Silken and warm and soft,
Am as ignorant as the man
Who sat in a Dacian cave,
Clad in blood-soaked skins,
Gnawing at roots and nuts.

A man who looked at a tree
And feared it, and felt its spell;
And bowed him down in awe,
And sacrificed, and prayed;
And was subject to the Tree,
Thinking it might be—God!

ANOTHER CHANCE.

Spring's first Robin perched on the apple tree;
"Hello!" said I. "Hello!" said he.
He ruffled his feathers and cocked his eye;
"We're back," said he. "We're back," said I.

He bit the cold buds cheerfully;
"I see it's the same old you," said he.
I looked him over, perched on high;
"I see it's the same old you," said I.

"What do you work for this year?" asked he;
"The same old hopes of last year," said I.
"What do you work for this year?" asked I;
"The same old hopes of last year," said he—

"What? After the Cat and that tragedy
Of your whole nest blown from the apple tree?
You've got the courage that takes you high,
If you build again after that," said I.

"Well, what of **your** dreams that didn't come true,
And the world that mocked and cheated you?
You must be brave, and I do not see
How you dare build again," said he.

ANOTHER CHANCE

"What d'ye want this year?" asked I;
"A strong nest under a placid sky
And your brood to cherish tenderly?"
"Well, you've got it about right," said he.

"What do you want this year?" asked he;
"An answer to all the Mystery?
Some haven within a faith's clear sky?"
"Please God! Yes, Robin, dear," said I.

"Well, Spring's here, anyhow," said he;
"Good luck!" and flew from the apple tree;
"Yes, what ever the hopes that die,
God gives us another Spring," said I.

DARK MINSTRELS.

We heard the poets singing in the dark,
We saw their lovely lights toss to and fro,
The while they gathered in their golden Ark
All the bright images of after-glow....
They struck us magic chords within the wood,
Showed us fair shapes alive with naked light;
They gave us rivers where the dream trees brood
And lovers wander all the starry night.

We turned and faced each other and we said:
"The poets pour us wine—they do not give us bread."

For these are singers of dear vanished things,
The things that once have been but may not be;
We sit with close shut lips; un-minstrelled, we;
No heart to chant to these enamored strings,
No song to chant to medieval lyre
That strikes us songs of Ninevah and Tyre.

Our lutes are tuned to dangerous unwalked ways
Where all is dense and beckoning shapes withdraw;
Where the untrodden path winds in a maze,
And lead to things no Seeker ever saw.
We sing the Mind's high dream, the imperious will,
That makes no music out of greedy strife
But seizes silver pipes, that sharp and shrill,
Call men to leap and seize on Very Life....
While other singers tell the old dreams o'er,
We rise and take us to the outer door;
Here on the wold, where no wise singer sings,
We feel the great Hand brush across our strings!

THE PEOPLE OF TODAY TO THE CLERGY OF TODAY.

Look now about you, fix your eyes on us,
Leave too-old mystic book and restful chair;
Take up our problems, things we must discuss,
Help us to think, to understand and dare.
Leave old-world Poetry of hallowed crime
And turn you to the hunger of the time.

Laws of the God, report them to the ears
That hear confused and cosmic voices rage;
Laws of the Christ, interpret them to fears
For Christ, new-risen in a Science-Age.
Oh, take the fire your sacred hands should give
And kindle it upon our city height;
Give us a world-strong law of wrong and right;
Teach us, not how to die, but how to live!

The hymns we sing must be the song of spheres,
The prayers we pray be truths of stone and star;
We want no sacrifice of sinner's tears,
We want to rise above this clay we are.
Our war machines, do they not teach the thing
Your maxims never taught us..? Ah, we flee
To the Waste Places in our sorrowing....
Show us the power of true divinity!

Look now around you, free your too-white hands;
Comfort these hearts that burn. What must we do?
We have no Paul, no Moses, only you.
Then help us to be honest. From all lands,
Priests! Men! Arise! Acclaim! The new bread give;
The Bread by which we shall not die, but live!

PROTAGONIST.

The fight was unequal, bitter and always new,
I saw how my enemy gained on me and how he drew
My strength, my youth, my soul from my shivering frame;
Yet have I not been beaten—I faced him whenever he came.
When he stabbed I watched how he did it—Poison, I studied the cup,
Flayed me with whips, I girded the bleedings up;
Hunger, imprisonment—all these I wrote in my book;
I have learned all the enemy's purpose, I know every look.
I have conned every gesture and gotten by heart all his guile,
Yet still comes the fear and the watchfulness under my smile;
For hard as I struggle to outwit his plot to betray me,
He holds that utterest thing that can utterly slay me—
Still do I turn and defy the face of him creeping;
"Now that I know thee, thou Life, thou art locked in my keeping;
Dungeoned, thou Horror, in creative cells of desire,
Ringed in the widening rings of my aspirate fire—
I, your Creator, by steady implacable strife,
Shall give men and women a lovelier thing to call 'Life.' "

SIGNAL FIRES.

Everywhere we have sought Thee—questioned,
wondered,
Everywhere marked Thy beauty and Thine hour;
Now if at last no sacrifice is brought Thee,
Dost Thou believe we doubt Thine awful Power?

Nay, we have loved, have striven, have served,
obeyed Thee,
Gloried in beauty of Thine, uttered Thy love;
Given long vigils to attain and mind Thee,
Spent lives in fixing Thee below, above.

Still dost withhold Thee, canst ignore this wonder
Of men who seek Thee in the manner Thou know-
est—?
Humble and longing, ignorant, who blunder,
Yet loyal to Thy will and where Thou goest?

We will not cowardly say Thou hast no feeling,
Will not believe Thou hidest back of the years;
Or hast no Word for rapturous revealing—
Art dumb like us; like us, art veiled in tears.

No. We believe; but now we work nor tire
Stirring the embers of the Cosmic Night;
Thou art the Source, we build our answering fire;
God of our Godhood, answer our Beacon Light!

MARTYR.

He waved his jests on spears of hidden grief,
Calmed by his silence all complaint and tears;
Filled hopeless hours with whimsical belief,
And laughed at fears.

He walked his bitter paths alert and bold,
No pity ever turned his steadfast eye;
If dull mouths grinned and goblin stories told,
He cared not why.

And with what end?
To end a dream of breath;
Singing his heart out to all withheld Joy,
Walking into the labyrinth of death,
Brave as a boy.

BALLAD OF THE THORN TREE.

Always, I noticed, lovers lay
Beneath a twisted tree
That grew in such a starvéd way
It seemed a mock to me.
  But when I questioned them, they'd say
"Oh what is that to thee?
Bright berries grow in lavish way
Upon this bitter tree;
Small scarlet lanterns swinging, they
For lovers such as we."

Always I noticed lovers dreamed
Beneath that furtive tree,
And so I said not how it seemed
Nor how it looked to me....
How all along the branches ran
Sharp thorns like stabbing spears,
How when the berries dropped away
The thorns stayed through the years....

Oh, never do I speak of this
To lovers loving free;
The new fruit gleams above their kiss,
The thorns they will not see.....

Mayhap after such glowing red
No thorn keeps agony,
But no fond lover ere has said
A thing like this to me.

BALLOONS ON THE BEACH.

Ball on bright ball,
On the sky glowing,
The old dreams recall
Of a child's knowing;
Eggs laid by a flying bird,
Jellies in globed curd,
Fruits on a strange tree,
By the winds blowing.

Now as each bobbing ball
Tugs at its holder,
I, who these dreams recall,
Feel hardly older.....
Drinking enchanted Cup
From Balloons, I rise up,
Swaying on sea and sky,
Color and flight am I!

Appled Balloon Tree,
Arched efflorescence,
Grow shining globes for me,
Of joyous essence;
Until bright bubbles spill
From a cup fancies fill
Brimmed iridescence!

THEY PASS.

Down the long road they go—
Elinor, Mary, Flo—
Hasting toward Something.
Daisies rank high today,
Wild roses spread the way;
Laughing, light words, they say,
Speeding toward.....Something!

Peg, on the other side,
Watches their splendid stride,
Shrinking from Something.....
Jennie, with broken tread,
Where a damp sun is shed,
Black shawl around her head,
Staggers from Something!

ON THE BEACH.

She sat in her gleaming robes
With the two hard-shining globes
Of her soul-less eyes, stare-fixed,
And said: "It is mine to know
How far he may come and go;
Mine to make him dance and sing,
His heart and his money fling
Away. He is mine to take,
And play with and bend and break;
The better for him I think.
We are put here to try each other.
Is he strong? He will not sink."

The other woman pulled
The thin shawl over her head.
"If he is strong?" she murmured
"If he is strong," you said.
But are we strong?" It is ours
To spare, to shield, to tend;
It is his to be hurt and broken,
To struggle and to fend.
It is equal, therefore we suffer.
(He suffers most, I think.)
We are put here to help each other.
Are we strong? He will not sink."

SAUL'S HILLS

1

Long after all the talking people go
On the white boat that rounds the sandy point,
The silenced hollows of the Commons show
A deepening curve; and where the grasses blow,
Dried to October wraith, I see annoint
A hundred lanes and valleys splashed with glints
Of silver moss and tawny tapered mints.

2

And where the moor roads plough the tangled sand
The sky's blue river floods these merging hills,
Pocomo Head white morning fire spills;
The deep swung ponds with sapphire sweep expand
Walled with red berries of the alder bough;
Stark monkish trees slant on the windblown space,
And gulls dip to the bay or open meadow place.

3

This is a world gone wild with wine of life,
Tossed in bright cups on frost enholied air;
Here Autumn swings the west wind's winnowing
scythe,
Or amber shod strays down the coral flare.
And on the shimmering slopes the swallows blithe
Still turn ecstatic honey-tippéd wings
And dart anew on rhythmic balancings.

4

I think that he who walks this undulance
Goes like a child back to some crystal Source,
Rich in adventures of the fields' romance,
The thistles' aeroplane, the gold of gorse;
Or buoyant, treading silver lichen crisp
Wing-footed on the elastic sod,
Fares on the milkweed's fanned ethereal wisp
Past semaphore of broom or goldenrod.

5

For here he finds the ineffable escape,
The clarity, the cleanness and the soul;
Here's laying on of hands, here things reshape
Into the round equilibrated Whole.
Here all is light and line, this grey fence strings
Its silver loops in limpid meadow lights;
Or drops its bars to infinite wanderings
By glimmering swamps on brake-illumined nights.

6

So suave these moor roads that the grasses blur
Along their misty lines; their curious curves
Unwind through dusks of bay and juniper
Past where the marsh hawk flares or rabbit swerves;
Where pond on mirroring pond among the hills
Is cupped in vital blue; whose magnet draws
Spiked pickerel weed; or starred sabatia thrills
Grass threaded ripples on the sandy shores.

7

So dumb are human hearts to every sound
That Nature has! Strangely attuned—dumb still!
There is no keynote to their most profound,
No language for true passion of their will;
Yet in these valleys on these sun-pooled moors,
Where turf roads wind to fountains of the sky,
I have seen Souls freed by the out-of-doors,
To find out here, their liberate ecstasy.

8

Perhaps these gemmy berries on the slope,
Perhaps these dryads of the circling hedge
Write runes of health and happiness and hope,
Or limn new truth in sand and rippled sedge.
For those who tread these wastes of Autumn's reach
Find dream and vision on the wind-washed lea;
Thoughts broaden, there is fire in the speech,
Minds stir beyond their wonted sophistry.

9

It is the other Self, the questing Ghost
That walks with us the bayberries' pungent trail;
Seeing this life an empty thing, at most,
Seeing dreams die and all beliefs grow pale.
Musing on hopes and visions, scattered hosts,
Till here, beside some mossy lichen rail,
The sky seems light with truth and starving minds,
Bathed in new energy of moorland winds!

10

The rosaries here are little mealy plums
Trailing like rubies through the tufted moss,
Here a late bee to evening primrose comes.
The fields' grey wreathéd smoky censers toss,
Where goldenrod has burned from gold to grey;
And asters smoke on an empurpled way.

11

Turfed roads that curve away to Madaket,
Dim roads that wind the valleys to Gibbs Pond,
Grass roads that dream to Polpis, we have yet
To find your subtle ends, what lies beyond!
You wind to wind the world; the simple ways
Of faith and trust and nobleness and love;
We only guess the towers beyond your haze,
We only glimpse the ends toward which you move!

12

Yet rutted roads, whose mild evasions lie
Seemingly blind or tortuous or dense,
Ye are most human in your subtlety,
Human in all your gentle evidence.
For though you pause and double, turn again
And seem to curve and hesitate, your moods
Are human moods; tired women and worn men
Follow in dream your errant solitudes.

13

They come for shriving by the hedgerow things
Where life, obedient to great moving laws
Brilliantly dies, or in birth scatterings
Writes mystical trail with myriad seeds and spores;
Where the dried weeds with hoary tresses blown
Quiver in brittle faith and stand serene,
Where in a tidal sunshine, every cone
Smells of sea-tree-branch, balsam-broomed and clean.

14

Solitude on the moors and to one's self—!
The blessing comes in spite of torturings;
In spite of all the gods upon the shelf
And all the false gods of material things.
Here where the thistle sends its wayward floss
Or where the marsh hawk swirls for meadow-food,
Alone on cloistered roads redeem thy loss
Of Spirit, in a bay-bushed solitude!

15

Oh, Spirit of ours, whom we have so betrayed,
As round these swimming hills our footsteps dream,
We see thy fugitive shimmer on the blade
Of every spear of grass; and by the gleam
Of sea light out at Pocomo and glade
Of twisted beech by rambling Polpis farm,
Or by the reedy pool where cattle strayed
Far from the fields stir up the midgy swarm.

16

Where all the rolling hillsides soft combine
On amphitheatres spread to open clefts,
There is hypnotic soothing in the line
Merging and melting in soft grassy wefts.
The brave bright cups that grail the open mead
Pour flower-libation on some tawny stretch;
And lily grails snowy processions lead,
And sweet fern banners guide the banded vetch.

17

And what does Man? He takes a wealth like this
And breaks it on the wheel of his machine,
Tarring it with the foul metropolis,
Caging its wildness and its free desmesne;
Little they know they build but to destroy,
Little they guess what gift they take away;
The heritage of every girl and boy
To roam these stretches of the heath and bay.

18

The exquisite clear candors of these moors
Seem to their eyes as sad as empty doom;
Their trivial gaze turns from the barren shores
And blurs along the ragged hills of broom.
They pant, they say, for human nature's food,
Yes—but they have not walked with happy Solitude!

19

Grey rain slow drifting over summer hill,
Over corn fields and through the meadow rifts.
With falling curtain calms the water till
Under its scorcery the landscape drifts;
The loomed mirage goes sailing to the sky,
The deep lines darken on the distant moors,
A placid silence lifts in mystery,
And headlands purple down to light-struck shores.

20

Then open farm a sterner grandeur takes,
The church dome glitters on fantastic North,
The wild ducks' chain expansion suddenly breaks,
And many a wedge-shaped line of geese fares forth;
Fateful the moorland looks and tawny drear,
Then the clouds lift and all the Island's clear.

21

O Truth, that moves upon the water's face!
O Truth, that cleaves the fire and cloud to be!
Help me with single eye thy form to trace,
In every form of flower and web and tree;
Help me to find thee in the cores of waves,
In every face that dreams into my ken;
Help me to see thee in the man that braves
The condemnation of his fellow men!

O shining Truth, sweeping across these fields,
Calm on the water's surface, or in storm,
Help me to find thee in the harvest yields,
In cloistered rooms and in the market's swarm!
Help me to find thee in the name of Sin,
The immortal shape of Woe that walks alone;
Help me to hear thy subtle lesson in
The negative, the dirge, the monotone!

Help me to know thee in the sturdy Mind
That holds its vision straight across the dark,
That dares to blaze a trail for all mankind
Yet wins no high serene nor earthly mark!
Help me to find thee behind solemn doors
Where men declare for finer, nobler codes;
Help me to find thee on the rainy moors,
And on the wanderings of these rutted roads!

22

The days are warm all Indian Summer through,
Placid and mild with dreaming full content;
Beach plums and grapes glimmer with frosty dew,
Rabbits career from hunter provident;
Mellow and hazy blurs the moorland scene,
Placid and still on dreamy tides of noon;
The fishing fleet comes silver laden in,
And over haystacks floats the harvest moon.

23

Horizoned moon, so round and thin and strange,
Great mellow bowl of gold September brew,
Diaphanous rolling over rolling range
Of solemn hills that part to let thee through.
Thou last great Toy of Summer, yellow boon,
All honey filled, lambent with creamy light,
Hardly a gazer of us but will croon
Some childish nonsense to thy disk tonight!

24

Upon a night of stars, the grave old Mill
Spreads out its fans upon a scudding sky;
The crescent harbor's ebony is still,
Studded with plangent lights trailed silvery.
Here is true self, once more with hand on lip,
Trying to read the night's deep graven lines,
Watching the shadow of some late come ship,
Or muffling darkness of the blotted pines.

25

The summer streets are filled with flickering swarms,
The village band is playing and the wheels
Of farmer wagons clatter past the farms. . . .
Bright headlights of black bulking automobiles
Flit back of Monomoy, where Indians, now
Pressing the clover with accustomed heels,
Would find great modern monsters on their track
Beside their wigwam or beyond their shack.

26

But as the music filters through the town,
And honey-suckle breathes around the doors,
One finds the lane as secret as the shores;
No modern engine treads its sweetness down,
No smart prospector makes this isle his own,
For pattern of the cheap and opportune—
Not 'neath this honey-suckle and this moon!

27

Back of the town where all the houses turn
Their mild grey fronts to winds that buffet strong,
The cobbled streets in patterns quaint and stern,
Lead to four trees spread on the sky like song;
Looking at these I paused the other day,
Wondering that beauty so bestript, forlorn,
Should strike a chord that takes processional way,
Crashed on the skies in branches gaunt and worn.

28

Twisted and starved these bitter trees that blow
Upon the Western sky like choral song,
Flinging strange rapture on the after glow;
Still radiant? Do these dead trees belong
To some tree-part of us, where bent and maimed
Green branches wither? Hampered twigs grow
wrong . . .?
Hush! On the screen of the bright Western sky
The crippled trees again burst into song.

29

Modest these little houses of the town,
Staring with sober windows over the lea,
Scattered are peaks and gables toward the down,
Trailing slow march from seaport to the sea.
Charmed thing to hear one's foot-fall sound along
Some moonlit, bricked, hedged street, whose panneled
doors
Gleam with bright knockers, where the oblivioned
stone
Was trodden once by Quaker ancestors.

30

The minstered Vast of immemorial sea,
Blue vaults and green that cave the Island tides
Choruses solemn dark immensity
To that Moon priest that with its law abides;
The hoodéd waves march on cathedral dunes,
Flagelant spring the breakers on the rips,
And the encircling shore is writ with runes
Of voyaging souls and questing sails and ships.

Yea, all around Cathedral Vast of sea
Blue vaults and green that cave the island's tides
Curled toppling Uncials of Eternity
Illumining the beaches' glistening sides;
New consecrate the sand's communion shell
With every moonlight chrism and sunrise swell.

Clean Island, cloistered ways unspoiled by man,
The thorn trees cloaked like prophets, and the reeds
Organ with murmurings of furtive Pan;
The spirits' intense strange music, lost from creeds,
Lost far from love—lost in all modern places;
Lost from the reading by all human faces,
Isolate—dumb; but if one wanders here,
Vocal and strong, immaculate and clear.

For now one figure left of all the gods
Goes singing down the thistle-lighted way;
One figure wanders through these island moods
Back from the town and back of all the bay.
And where the goldenrods their censers sway
Against a brake or by a grey swamp wood,
Over the moor steals happy Solitude.

31

The corn is stacked, the pumpkins' on the roof,
Globule on grey their ponderous green and gold,
The laughing gull wantons its wild reproof,
The water's blue is strangely laced with cold;
Vermilion berries coral the black-hedged pond,
Around the shore the chilly foam-patch quivers,
The sweet fern shrivels up its copper frond,
The owl flaps heavily, the farmland shivers.

32

These are the roads the island farmers took,
Slow-following flocks that tinkled towards the town,
And stopped to crop the clover or to look
With hornéd stare across the purple down.
These are the roads the shearers of the sheep
In high-swung wagons rode; these winding trails
Moccasins knew, where now the children keep
To Shimmo Shore with huckleberry pails.

33

What is the thing that on these commons gives
Me back to Me? What is this thing that heals
The cities' wounds, that shows to me where lives
The Being of Me? What scorcery reveals
My hidden Native, blind, unnamed, unsung,
Wrapped in its passionate ardors like a shape
Of chambered chrysalid Soul—close woofed, high swung,
Waiting for sun and rain and winged escape?

34

There are wild days out on the winter heath,
Wild days asmoke in mystery and flame;
The black ducks break their columns into wreath,
The gaunt trees cringe away in windblown shame;
The moody skies press to the barren earth,
Sullen the sea hangs foam around the shore;
There is a look of starving and of dearth
Along the shivering roads across the moor.

35

Then, as if space awed of its yawning breach
Desired rhythms to sound some message home,
Crash in great clouds, dark waves of earthy speech,
The farmlands' seaweed pile and stubbled loam.
There is cloud-writing on the scrolléd West,
The church's dome swells symboled on the sky;
Austere the landscape, yet so clear expressed,
It looms to awe and brooding majesty!

36

And then on Headland or on barren dune,
The wild light leaps, born of the naked sea;
The North cliffs are cathedral; there is rune
And choral in the surf's antiphony.
The laborer, who slowly takes his way
Back to the hamlet in the early night,
Sees the old village set in convent grey,
And candled shrines of votive window light.

37

There are great days in Autumn, when the world
Turns to blue fire and all the hills are red;
One hears the fishing gulls' wild screaming skirled
Up to the wingéd comrades overhead.
The Sound is flecked with scudding green and white.
And beaches stretch away to golden glow,
Till stars hang garlanded along the night,
And constellations swing liquid and low.

38

And foggy days, when wrapped in trailing pause,
The trees, like ships, sail pearly seas bemused
With melting sails and ropes of rainy gauze
Making for harbor, tenuous, confused,
Anchored in subtle inlets, phantom cruised;
Where voyagers land unchallenged, unperused,
With silver myrrh to sanctify the homes,
And cloudy swirls to hallow forth the domes.

39

These ships bring stores by which my heart is fed,
The voyagers of this filmy vapor flight
Lay balm on gashes where the soul has bled,
Wrapping its wounds in meshes of soft light.
And I am soothed of grief, who take a white
Communion under calm of dripping trees,
Walking uncandled avenues of rainy night
With veiléd forms to nebulous mysteries.

40

Charmed thing to drift along the narrow lanes
Where some dear door flies open to the rap,
To sit behind windows of whaling days;
A lantern in the hall, a chair mayhap
Some geniused Folger used, to read a log
Stamped with inked whales, kept blue from boyhood
cruise;
The Swift that wound the yarn, peat from the bog—
The horn the Town Crier used to cry the news.

41

Charmed thing to catch a sea-word full of spice,
To eat of beach plum jelly by the fire,
To see rag rugs hooked like a sailor's splice,
To watch the peats' blue flicker on the fire;
To see the rafters carved in sailor-ways,
Paintings of canvased ships crossing the bars,
When daring whalers went uncharted ways,
And laid their course by youth's adventurous stars.

42

Along the street in early morning's glow,
Down to their boats the Portuguese fishers go;
And through the cobbled alleys bootéd feet
Drown the gruff voice as sailors comrades meet.
Then shawled forms slip down to the baker's shop,
The Spanish bell rings in the tower top,
The placid tradesmen wait the lifted latch,
And quahog diggers launch for the clamming patch.

43

But village stir and village matters keep
Free Masonry too subtle and too deep
For strangers' smattering tongue and half-taught eye
That sees them through a garbled mystery.
What shall be known of souls that live and love,
Marry and bear, know joy and agony,
Under blue circle of an Island sky
Within the silver ring of sounding sea?

44

Their quiet dreams take root in resolute ways.
Their poetry is blown to spurts of flame;
From their grim grandeur of forgotten days
Comes many a high and sober-minded name.
Their character persists where many a door
Opened its narrow pride to let them roam,
Their feet stand firm on an unshaken floor,
Roofed by great roof-trees of New England home.

45

So to the memory their great names come
What time they reckoned life and grasped its fact,
Their splendid hours when their spirits' dumb,
Unworded promise became conscious act;
The Islanders, Nantucketers, their theme
Endures in a worth that cannot fail,
Across the country their progressive dream
Steadily marks the Great New England Trail.

46

For even now in times of want and war,
In times of apathy and greed and fear,
The challenges to spirit skyward soar,
The core of stalwart things is hidden here:
The white shoals lift like new creative shore,
The Sound's salt breath comes like a stirrup cup,
Till every wanderer takes his burden up.

47

So, with it all remote, tranquil, unchanged,
Untouched in depths of solitude and peace,
The Island fades away, the shoals are ranged,
Backward in sliding rank the bluffs decrease;
Backward they slide, the glittering Sound spreads wide.
Now is no road to Island paths but foam,
A long, long water-path twixt us and home.

48

Yet when we sit in silence at the board
And shapen silver glitters on the white
Damask, bubbled with flower and glass and scored
With sensuous patterns of the candle light,
One smiles and speaks of 'Sconset Lighthouse flare,
Of sails like wings tapered upon the Sound,
Of tossing cross-rip by the bell buoy, where
The schooners get their ranges outward bound.

49

There falls a silence until someone tells
An old wife's tale; another speaks of bay,
Another one of canterbury bells,
And someone else of meadows stacked with hay.
The kindling smile goes round, the voices muse,
The light is kind that travels from eye to eye,
And many lonely Island trampings fuse;
Along rut roads go many a memory.

50

With eyes alight we say: "When shall I go
Where the blue chicory twinkles toward the town,
Or Bouncing Bet bathes in a rosy snow,
Or where the night wafts scent across the down;
When shall I breathe the breath of inshore spins,
And see the darkling fern of water-flaws,
And catch the drive of myriad mackerel fins
Where the furred trawler floats its netted jaws!"

51

In spite of foppish talk and city form,
We take the lane and loiter on the crest,
Speaking in terms of Island sun and storm;
The marlins' tarry smell, the breakers' breast,
Until across the light and baffling word
There steals the old sea-wind, and with a thrill
The stagnant pools of city minds are stirred,
Incoming tides the vapid channels fill.

52

But we (who know) speak in no idle way,
We hold no rendezvous, nor name an hour;
We make no promise when to go or stay,
We do not plan to gather fruit or flower;
We only tell the Image deep within
Our struggling beings: "Beyond all abodes
And all the challenging, whether we lose or win,
Spirit, we two shall take the Island roads!"

SEA-MEASURE.

All night long the even roll of sea
Rhythmic and slow
On silence to whose inner mystery
No man may go.

Socrates, Plato, Christ must all have heard
Walking the lonely beach
Listening for that hidden inner word
That they might teach.

All lonely men the centuries send down
To master human things
Must have been strengthened by this monotone
To evener ponderings.

Quietly feeling what we feel tonight
That there is hidden bond
Between our Deepselves and some infinite
Deepness beyond.

IN AN OLD BURYING GROUND.

This is strange heraldry
The graveyard paints
For him who best perceives
Its curious feints.
Under its leaning stones
Sailors and parson men
Titles and beggarmen
Maidens and crones,
Mingle their bones.

They laugh at dreams we weave
Of equality
Under the sun
Yet here it's done!
Under the frail grass-spear
All these are equal here
None lie alone.

Greek name and Bible name
Pagan and prude;
Under the grass
Not any class.
Fine old aristocrat—
Right near his trimkept plat
The cobbler's lass!

Also I notice near
Sun shining full and clear
Violets as blue.

IN AN OLD BURYING GROUND

The man who used to swear
Sleeping quite calmly there
Where Quakers do.

Dreamer and prig and crank;
Humble and full of swank
Level they rank
To us they all seem just
Handfuls of human dust
Even and blank.

And this I've come to hold
One may be quite an old
Aristocrat;
But when one comes to die
Things are Democracy
And that is that!

CHRISTMAS EVE ON NANTUCKET.

For half an hour tonight we wander
Through the streets,
And see the Christmas trees against the lighted pane;
And catch child voices raised in glee and hear
Street singers chanting carols loud and free
Then a bell tone, and then the far-off sea.

We turn a corner and we pass a house
Whence strains of music come,
"Minuit Chrétians—" They will be singing that in Paris tonight!
From a side gate a scarlet figure booted, slips with bells
Jingling; some amateur Santa Claus late for festival.

Here a bright voiced smiling woman hurries along
To the dim lighted church, bearing a hemlock wreath
Made by her hands.
Upon white panelled doors hang other wreaths
Woven from ground pine near Wannacomet Pond.
And scarlet berries blaze
In window boxes bare of summer flowers
But now made Holiday.

Another narrow street, and here the candles shine
Ranging along the pane in a white row,
Lovely immaculates of memory.
And in another window a small figure
A dainty mandarin poised in Chinoise grace
Beneath some mistletoe!
And in one window more an old white head
Is bent over some early coming gift
Brought by the letter carrier
From children far away.
Late! Yet a few steps further, where the narrow lane
Turns to the moors. There in December skies
Tender with Christmas memories of years on years,
Hangs in its winter white, The Evening Star!

SONG OF THE LIGHTSHIPS.

(Landlubber's Chantey.)

When the wolves of wind press hard
On the wild seas snarling pack,
And the waves bite the shore
And the shore bites back;
When the night's like a cave
Full of black things howling
And the hurricanes rave
With the whistle buoy yowling.

There's a rusty trusty boat that never makes a port,
There's a scrubby bold boat that never finds a lee,
The blunt little lightship,
The iron clad lightship,
The weather-wise lightship,
Anchored out at sea!

When the storms signal's set,
Great Point stuck with masts,
And the range lights blur
Through the wicked black blasts
When the extra anchors drag
And the bell buoy clangs
And the jetty rocks swirl
Under tide rips fangs.

There's one little boat that never makes a port
There's one tidy ship that never seeks a lee

SONG OF THE LIGHTSHIPS

The blunt little lightship
The staunch, able lightship
The game, snubby lightship
Anchored out at sea.

When the night's very still
And the moon rides high,
There's one strange craft
Gives a hail and stands by.
Though the forms on her decks
Have a look of the dead
Still they warn of a wreck
Or a shoal dead ahead.

It's the winter-lost Lightship that never found a lee
It's the tide-driven Lightship that never made a port
It's the silent-crewed Lightship, the speechless brave
Lightship
The ice-covered Lightship
Sunk at sea.

Now when home fires blaze
And the storm is shut out,
And the wind and its ways
Are sea-yarned about;
When the good glass is lifted
In the good pipe smoke
And the good talk has drifted
From the well worn joke.....

Toast the one little boat that never makes port!
Sing of the craft that never hunts a lee—
Drink to the lightships, the lonely crews of light-
ships
The lunging, plunging lightships
Anchored out at sea!

SEPTEMBER NOON.

Upon the warm brick walls the patterns come,
Dim moving likenesses of pensive leaves;
The swallows twitter round the ivied eaves
Late bees in perilous petunias hum;
On the moors, amber grape and bloomy plum,
But here in trim back-yards the apple's face
Twinkling with dahlias in some latticed place.

The stranger's foot has gone and all the world
Has settled down to Island ways of peace,
Where the clouds mid-summer caravans cease
Soundlessness on the hills is silver-furled!
Now all faint scents and spice of full increase!
The scarlet pepper pendant on its bush
And late corn leaning on the farmland hush.

Slow wagons trundle with the sea-grass haul,
The crickets, palaced in the golden rod
Begin their strumming; the horse-chestnuts fall
And morning glories on the trellis nod;
Marigold's velvet turns to pungent pod.
A sea of azure girds the shores around;
The tawny silence mellows till the deep
Steamboat whistle's sombre-throated sound
Wakens the isle from Indian Summer's sleep
Then all is bustle and the city's stir
Once more has come upon the Islander.

MAIN STREET BY MOONLIGHT.

The old church clock strikes one, and down the row
Of ancient houses where the moonlight floods,
The black tree branches move like wands that throw
A net of woven loopings flecked with buds.
The night is still, a silver quiet now
Transforms the plain old homes whose ancient mood
Returns; through panelled doorways come and go
Figures soft shod, in prim calash and hood;
Here by a lilac bush the little gate
Supports two figures of sweetheart and beau
Here by a hedge two others hesitate
Then join the shadowy thronging too and fro.

Do you believe that in those rooms upstair
The newer generation dreams again
Back to the lives of all these women and men
Setting them free to haunt the pavements here?
That youngsters sleeping see sails homeward fare,
Ships laden with treasure and salt romance;
The Quakers' broad brim; Puritans askance?
That such bold dreaming sets these spirits free
On this deserted street in moonlit beam
"Coming alive," though coming soberly
And looking on us as figures in **their** dream?

MAIN STREET BY MOONLIGHT

Hush, with what proud simplicity these figures move
And live again austerities of grace
Who used their lives so guardedly—this glove
The homespun petticoat! this barbe of lace!
Boots and prunellas on the brick path pace;
Fair tinted skin, clear eye and honored name
Come through the panelled doors or garden place.
The scholars' reserve, the solid merchants' fame
The Friends, the Captains, blooded knight and dame,
Who to old English gentry backward trace.

So through the cobbled streets they silently press
On very gentle errands of their own
And make no plea, and no proud tale confess
Nor look aghast at their once simple town
Yet do they smile, permitting us to guess
That they prefer their own to our renown....

Was that the clock just struck....the street is clear
The moon rides high, there are no figures here..
Someone stopped dreaming in this street, my dear!

PSALM OF IMAGINED HUNGER.

If I were starving in Nantucket I would first
Go down to the beach and dig for quahaugs;
Or some scallops.
Or drop overboard a neat little lobster car,
Or row to a place where there are wild oysters;
Then I would hang around the docks at five o'clock
When the fishermen come in,
And perhaps get an extra plaicefish
Or some shark or black fish,
(Though I shouldn't like to eat horseshoe crab or squid)
That failing, I would go out on the moors and snare a pheasant;
I would catch a rabbit and though I wouldn't know how to cook it, an owl.
To eat crow, I have heard is not judicious—but how about marsh-hawk?
If it were August I would get Irish moss out of the sea,
And flavor it with cranberries.
I would then go crabbing near Our Island Home;
If it were July I should live in the blueberry patches
And find black berries, (you know where!)
And get strawberries in the old cemetery.
I would go mushrooming (very prudently) in fields near Thorn Lots.

PSALM OF IMAGINED HUNGER

I would go beach plumming (very early) on the
State Road
I would get in touch with grape vines near Wau-
winet
And with hazel nuts near 'Sconset
And dig for swamp root out near Madaket.
Elder berry would be a last resort!
I would hang over the fences of a certain yard in
Hussey Street
To see if grapes and pears would come to me.
Or I would interrupt tea-parties on Pleasant
Street
Boldly walking in and asking for apples.
Of course I would weed the potato patch of any-
one that asked me to
For two potatoes.
I would help with the melons and do what I could
for corn and pumpkins;
Peaches and cherries I would pluck on shares
But if all these things failed I would go to a little
house,
Where they always know what I mean
And ask for food!

THE MOON-CANOE.

Where evening tides creep dark and blue,
I launch my little moon-canoe.

I leave the planet harbor light,
And lay my course along the Night.

I paddle down the Milky Way
Where phospher sky weeds gleam and spray,

And pluck what starry branches grow
Along its winding overflow.

I swing my shallop out mid dream
Where tides of summer evening stream;

And carried on this sound so wide,
Still on and on and on I glide,

Harking, along the Western bar
The bell buoy of a swinging star.

My meteor anchor will, I ween,
Hold in this dark of depth unseen;

The dew, my silver lead and line
Doth sound me shallows of star shine;

And now and then I reef the veil
Of fog that serves me for a sail.

When, bold, I make the Western lee,
Old pilot shadows signal me;

And tacking windward come a fleet
Of clouds, with ghostly spar and sheet.

I follow them and disembark,
And moor my boat beyond the Dark.

DEPRECATION.

While mending nets I made the songs I knew,
Hummed them for sake of humming, not for
singing;
But as I crooned, the bell-buoy crooned them too,
The blacksmith had them on his anvil ringing,
And the gulls carried them on clearcut winging..

Yet, if their ragged form the world regrets,
Do you explain...."But, she was mending nets!"

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 012 225 944 4